

GUIDE TO NORTH AMERICAN PIRATE ACTIVITY

1984 Edition

by Keith J. Thibodeaux

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GUIDE TO NORTH AMERICAN PIRATE ACTIVITY

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1984 STATION ACTIVITY REVIEW

by Kirk G. Baxter

During the past twelve months, a variety of stations, some new and some old and familiar, have been on the air with unique programming. John Arthur has reviewed some of these stations and this article will highlight some of the other broadcasters who appeared (and in some cases, disappeared) during 1984.

KPRC: KPRC is primarily seen on the medium wave frequency of 1616 and often on FM, but it occasionally appears on shortwave. The station readily identifies itself with New York City and is regularly heard on the East Coast and periodically in the Midwest on MW and nationally on shortwave. The station plays lots of 60s music and has various political discussions on topics such as the elections and nuclear war. It often uses a phone loop to take calls from listeners. Sign-off is usually signalled by the song "Good Night Irene."

VOICE OF TOMORROW: This station has been on the air for a couple of years, always causing controversy with its broadcasts. The station features professionally produced programs on both medium wave and shortwave. Topics are always supportive of the "pure white race," and its programs do not hesitate to express its feelings in this regard. Specific topics have included the dominance of Jews in the media, the erosion of public schools, and the civil war. This station is more aptly classified as a "clandestine" rather than a pirate. VOT utilizes the writings of various "patriotic authors" regularly in its broadcasts and urges its listeners to act to avoid further pollution of our society and government. The Nazi Youth song "Tomorrow Belongs to Me" and the distinctive wolf howl and drum roll are the trademarks of the station.

RADIO ANGELINE: Appearances have been made by Radio Angeline on both medium wave and shortwave. This station utilizes an interval signal of "Send in the Clowns" played on a music box, repeated several times. A show by Jo Jo Katoo, "a voyage of eternal love," usually follows. Often the DJ refers to Angeline, his long lost love. This station seems to appear most frequently around the New Year's holiday period.

RADIO CLANDESTINE: R. F. Burns, the proprietor of this station, has operated a very successful Radio Clandestine for years. It may be the longest-lived U.S. pirate station still on the air. Its very professional program production and powerful signals are legendary. They have operated in many places in the shortwave spectrum, including various places in the international shortwave broadcast band. RC plays a variety of rock music and specialized in comedy routines. The broadcasts originate from a ship off the North American coast. Characters on board the ship include the operator, R. F. Burns; the chief engineer, Boris Fignutsky; and Drool, the cabin boy. Often, the broadcasts have short soap opera-like segments featuring the Radio Clandestine regulars. This station continues to be one of North America's most popular pirates.

KQRP: KQRP was one of the stations which disappeared during 1984. Dr. X made very frequent appearances, especially during the summer; in September, he decided that KQRP should leave the air before he had a knock on the door from Uncle Charlie. The station's programming was diverse, including children's records, rock music, folk music and country music. Also featured were cuts from old television shows and old radio programs. On the final

broadcast on September 9th, Dr. X announced he would be back in the future with a new station.

RADIO FREE INSANITY: Unfortunately, RFI received that knock on the door from Uncle Charlie on April 9th. The station had been on the air frequently during late 1983 and early 1984 playing a variety of music and comedy records. The station was heard all over the country by hundreds of SWLers with the DJ being "The Electric Buddha." After the genuine RFI was put off the air, a "copycat" station appeared using that name and the DJ also called himself the "Electric Buddha." However, the programming quality was not comparable and it disappeared as quickly as it appeared.

NEW WAVE RADIO INTERNATIONAL: This station appeared with some regularity during the early spring, but has been inactive for the last several months. As the name suggests, it specialized in new wave rock music with marathon broadcasts at very late hours. Although the station's format was basically music, at times, the content degenerated to sexual discussions and racist jokes.

KLS: KLS appeared on 7441 during the summer of 1984 with programming of rock music. Many listeners had problems receiving the station as it was plagued by RTTY QRM. The DJ called the broadcasts the "Key Largo Show." The station also appeared over the Christmas holiday in 1984.

RADIO ESPIRITU: Who says pirate radio is all alike? Well, then they never have heard of R. Espiritu. This station appeared during the late spring of 1984 with a format of uninterrupted Gregorian chant. Although you may not find listening to chant very interesting, you have to agree it IS different. The IDs were the only deviations from the standard programming of continuous medieval church music.

SAMURAI RADIO: Samurai Radio identifies itself as the "Voice of Oriental America." It has been heard playing a variety of rock music and opens a phone loop every once in a while. The DJ claims that R. Samurai has been around since 1978. The station mentioned that it was going to be discontinuing operations with its broadcast at the end of May. However, it was heard subsequent to that date, but has not been heard recently.

DAS GLOCKENSPIEL: This station has appeared on a random basis during the last few years playing taped German music and even commercials from a Chicago GG language radio program and perhaps some taped programs in GG from elsewhere in the world. Its typical sign-off has been a recording of "O Tannenbaum" preceded by rocket sound effects. This station has appeared around New Year's and the Fourth of July.

SECRET MOUNTAIN LABORATORY: SML is known for playing a variety of somewhat unusual music. Rock, country rock, Arabic and other music are featured. Occasionally, the DJ would run excerpts from the programs of stations such as KFAT. Also, the station features various gag advertisements for nonexistent products such as truck driver steroids.

VOICE OF THE EPILEPTIC CATFISH: Although this station has only been known to be on the air once, its name shows how imaginative pirates can become. The announcer urged his listeners to send get well cards to Mr. Catfish at two "confused" maildrop addresses, one being Ankara, Czechoslovakia. It made its one and only known appearance in November of 1984. Perhaps we didn't send enough get well wishes...

SEASONAL STATIONS

Pirates tend to broadcast during national holidays when they feel their chances of being caught are lesser. This can be seen in the listing by dates/times in this publication. In some instances, stations appear to have coordinated their efforts to put on "pirate fests" wherein several stations broadcast sequentially, and, in some cases, the previous station announces that its transmission will be followed by that of another pirate station.

Although not a federal holiday, Halloween has been a holiday which has attracted much attention from the pirate stations. Several stations have developed Halloween programming specifically for broadcast at this time. Stations which are often heard at Halloween (and perhaps not any other time during the year) include the Voice of the Purple Pumpkin, Munchkin Radio and WBST.

The Voice of the Purple Pumpkin has been making appearances since the early 1970s. Rumor has it that the station which appears currently calling itself Purple Pumpkin Radio is a fifth or sixth generation copy of the original station. Nonetheless, this station has somewhat of a cult following and will generate interest each time it appears. It has had professionally produced programs which have typically signed off with Shirley Temple's "On the Good Ship Lollipop" followed by a chorus of barking dogs. Another station of the season, Munchkin Radio, often appears around the Halloween season playing old music appropriate to the holiday. Its broadcasts are very short, but seem to be well-produced.

WBST claims it will "bring out the beast in you." It announces a Salem, Massachusetts broadcast location and uses the "Exorcist" music as its theme. Sign on followed a loop of "They're Coming to Take Me Away" with laughter. Station was noted to be operated by the Lucifer Broadcasting Corporation.

The Christmas and New Year's holiday periods seem to be the most active. This activity can be attributed to (1) the holidays, (2) station operators are home from college, and (3) more SWLers are listening to their radios. The last Christmas/New Year's period featured many stations, some new and some very familiar. Over fourteen different stations were logged during this period of 1984, with some of the stations making several broadcasts. Stations heard included R. Angeline (both SW and MW), Free Radio 1615 (MW), KLS, KROK, KRZY, Global American Network, Radio Sine Wave, Radio Sound Wave, Union City Radio, Voice of Laryngitis, Voice of the Rainbow, WKUE, WMTV, and Zeppelin Radio Worldwide.

So, when making your holiday plans, remember that while you are out terrorizing the neighborhood with your Halloween costume, you may be missing out on great SWLing. And when you are opening all your Christmas packages or drinking your New Year's libations, you are ignoring some of the best times for logging those seasonal pirates. So plan your year accordingly!!

The author, Kirk Baxter, has been active in SWLing for the last 15 years and is the editor of the Dialogs section of A*C*E. He also operates the remote computer bulletin board system for A*C*E. He lives in suburban Kansas City and is currently employed by the State. Besides his interest in radio, he is actively involved in the various computer user groups in the Kansas City area.

PIRATE PROGRAMMING PERSPECTIVE

by John T. Arthur

There are several types of unlicensed broadcasters active today, loosely classified as: political clandestine, alternative and the infamous "kids playing radio." Clandestines are covered extensively by several clubs and Gerry Dexter's C-C-N, so we will concentrate on the remaining two types.

One of the newest and best alternative broadcasters is The Voice of Laryngitis. Its recent broadcasts in the 19 and 41 meter bands have been prototypes of what free radio is all about. The Huxley Family Players (Genghis, Cowboy Stan, Reverend Billy Bod and little Michael) interweave several lines of humor in their half hour programs, never driving any one line into the ground. The St. Patrick's Day broadcast featured a running gag on "spy numbers for the CIA," as well as "The Case of the Radio Pusher," a full-blown radio drama, and obviously took many hours to prepare.

VoL has a series of five QSL cards and verifies correct reports if three 22-cent stamps are included. Report via Box 982, Battle Creek, MI 49016.

One of today's favorite alternative broadcasters is KQSB International, operating on the 48, 41, 26 and 19 meter bands since 1982. Broadcasting from sites on both East and West coasts, KQSB has received reports from nearly 30 states, four Canadian provinces and South Africa. KQSB never announces when it will broadcast and is rarely on more than 20 minutes. The programming, untypical rock and jazz, comedy and editorial opinion, is handled by Uncle Ralph, the Old Art, and Phranque Furter, who says, "Our sole purposes is to provide an entertaining alternative..." A disillusioned commercial engineer, Julio Mohammed O'Reilly, joined the staff in 1983, permitting KQSB to become the second pirate to experiment with stereo SW broadcasting, using two transmitters on different frequencies.

KQSB offers three different QSL cards and a pretty blue form letter for correct reports accompanied by three 22-cent stamps. Tapes are welcome. Report via Box 5074, Hilo, HI 96720 and tell them you read it in the North American Handbook of Pirates, 1984.

"From a Space Invaders game in Peoria, Illinois, KMA, 'the rock of the pirates' brings you Doctor Why?," crackled the radio over HBO theme music; then Beethoven rolled over and another new station was on the air. Broadcasts with 100 to 500 watts into a dipole featured '70s rock, Pirate Radio News and ads for an instant pirate radio station. Humorously produced premos and smooth studio techniques set KMA above Kids Playing Radio; with some creative input, they could have become one of America's favorites. In July, however, Doctor Why? sold the transmitter and put on a tie to get a job.

KMA still offers to QSL correct reports with three mint stamps via Box 3192, Joliet, IL 60434.

RTTY chatters, static roars, a siren wails through the noise of 41 meters. A siren" There it is again, no doubt about it: "Your equation for entertainment - Radio Sine Wave" is on the air again. RSW, also known as Mathematical Radio, boasts a short but active history; it has broadcast several original programs since the spring of 1984 including a classic Voice of Tomorrow parody. The latest (possibly last) program contained a Beatles music profile, news of computer racism read by Dr. Calculator, remote reports from Cory Storage and Rom Backup about Independence Day festivities in Microchip City which turned violent, listeners' letters and many, many computer puns.

Radio Sine Wave will send a computer drawing of Mount Microchip to verify correct reception reports sent via Box 5074, Hilo, HI 96720 and including three 22-cent stamps for reply. Allow adequate time for mail handling, since there is no direct mail service to Microchip City.

"From the dark, deserted streets of a city destroyed" comes Tangerine Radio to provide relief from radio indigestion. The only known North American anarchist station, TR combines selected relevant music, not-so-subtle social comment and anti-establishment activities, Raunchy Rick tells you to punch extra holes in computer billing cards and plays music from "Imagine" to "Lynch the Landlord." Programs are produced in a commercial studio in downtown Miami and flown to the Bermuda Triangle transmitter site in unmanned airships. TR originally had problems getting out, but it has been heard in Kentucky and Tennessee, so problems may be fixed. It broadcasts at random, but likes the full moon.

TR will send you a tangerine colored "global football" QSL if you hear its 20-watt signal. To get one, send a complete and detailed reception report with three mint first class stamps to Box 5074, Hilo, HI 96720; tapes and fresh tangerines also accepted. Watch for the soft Tangerine glow in your mind's eye; a sure sign you're tuned to Tangerine Radio.

"The Fat One has done for your radio what four years has done for your gym shoes" coughs the loudspeaker, and with a pluck of banjo, the only country-folk free radio station in North America is on the air. KFAT operates on 1560 and 41 meters from a remote swamp location, using the format (and some tapes) from the original KFAT-FM, in Gilroy, CA. Hank Williams, Johnny Cash and others are sieged with humoresque non-commercials for things like a record which will teach you to talk CB jargon.

The Fat One is really Fred Oyster, who handles programming and engineering. He says KFAT draws "a wide variety of listeners, which proves that this is a commercially viable format. Yet the original station dumped it."

Fred offers to verify correct, detailed reception reports (accompanied by three mint first class stamps) to Box 5074, Hilo, HI 96720.

A foghorn on 41 meters? No, it's not a numbers transmission; you've found Radio North Coast International and that's the sound of the good ship USS Sphincter. Captain Willy cruises the "Beautiful brown waves of the polluted Great Lakes" searching for signs of Life. While afloat in international waters, RNCI takes to the air with well done theme programs. Programs include

unusual rock, off-the-wall oldies, some of the strangest comedy on record, ads for "Dian's House of Leather Restraints - in the Mellowville Mall..." and frequent IDs by Willy and friends.

The 200 watt signal has already been heard across two-thirds of North American, and should be audible in Europe. Listeners report slight drifting, suggesting use of a VFO. If RNCI crawls out of your loudspeaker, send your report and three mint first class stamps to: Radio North Coast International, Box 245, Moorhead, MN 56560. It will send a pretty blue card for all correct reports.

"74 - WKUE, where all the good songs have gone" blares the radio, then Mr. Koffee wires up with Paul Revere and the Raiders, The Kingsmen, the Turtles and Tower of Power. WKUE is a new station specializing in old music, and "we make the WIMP weep!" The signal is well-modulated with processed audio for maximum readability, and programs are "pro-sounding," to quote one listener. The telescoped tape I received contained only a good cross-section of music and live IDs, but Mr. Koffee hasn't had time to do much production. with just a little more creativity, I expect 74-Q will become a favorite. Watch for this one"

WKUE is presently getting QSL cards printed and will send a form sheet until they arrive. Send a detailed reception report and three mint first class stamps to: 74-WKUE, Box 5074, Hilo, HI 96720.

John T. Arthur has been a full time radio fanatic since age ten. His education and experience is in electronics and broadcasting; even his tour in the Army was in communications. Since the early '60s, John's primary interest has been in Free Radio on all bands. He has 40 pirate QSLs in his collection. Always a writer, John's first column was for NASWA (then NASA) in 1962. He later edited for the FRC-USA and is presently a columnist for The Monthly A*C*E. He coordinates The Director, listing station addresses, and his "Programming Perspective" appears in Monitoring Times.

Born in Rhode Island, John now lives on the Big Island, near Pahoa, Hawaii, with Rocky (the DX cat), spending lots of time at the dials of his TMC GPR90, surplus R388 and Sony ICF2001. If you would like to receive a review of your favorite station, send a cassette recording to John at Box 5074, Hilo, HI 96720.

QSLing THE PIRATES

by Scott McClellan

As if hearing pirates wasn't a big enough challenge, trying to obtain QSL verifications from these stations can be even more difficult. Some stations are very good verifiers, responding to correct and complete reception reports within a few weeks. Other stations don't even announce a mailing address. And still, others fall between these two extremes.

The purpose of this article is to give you some hints and tips to maximize your chances at verifying those elusive stations.

To start with, in order to QSL a pirate, you must hear it first! As silly as it may seem, more than a few people have tried to "verify" transmissions which they never heard, by taking program details from club newsletters and making phony reports. Fortunately, these reports are usually easy to spot, and go into the round file. And the DXer's reputation also goes into the dumpster!

Hearing pirates can be difficult, but the key word is persistence. It is a matter of being at the right spot on the dial at the right time, and the more time you spend at your receiver, the better your chances are.

There are certain patterns that are followed, with some exceptions. By glancing through the 1984 transmissions listed elsewhere in this reference manual, you should be able to spot some patterns easily. Most transmissions occur on weekends. Holidays are also popular. Many are within 50 kHz of 7400 kHz, with other frequency ranges less populated with bootleg signals (i.e., 1610-1640, 6200-6300, and 15010-15100 kHz). Chances are that if you have a reasonably sensitive and selective receiver, an outdoor antenna, and lots of patience, you'll log several pirates a month...maybe even more! DXers in the eastern part of the U.S. will usually have better luck than those in the west, as most stations seem to be in the east or midwest. But those in the west just need to try a little harder; although pirates are low powered, the signals are often heard coast to coast.

So, now that you have nabbed the station you've been trying six months to hear, how do you get that QSL?

How To Report

The most obvious thing you need when sending a report is an address to use. Many, but not all, pirates utilize the services of a mail drop. A mail drop will collect the reports for a station, and forward them on to the operators. From that point on, it's entirely up to the station to decide if you deserve a QSL.

A station will usually announce its mail drop address several times during the course of a transmission, along with any special requirements, such as how much postage needs to be sent.

But, what if you don't hear any address announced? How will you be able to send in your report? Unfortunately, some stations just are not interested in QSLing, and therefore do not have a mail drop. In this case, you are just plain out of luck. But, perhaps you tuned in too late to hear the address announcement, or just did not have a good enough signal to enable you to copy it clearly. If you belong to a DX club, you may be in luck. Check through issues of your club bulletins to see if anyone else may have reported a previous

broadcast. If so, the address might be listed. Your best bet is to belong to one of the clubs that specialize in unlicensed transmissions. As of press time, the only such club in North America is the Association of Clandestine radio Enthusiasts (A*C*E).

This club publishes a monthly bulletin packed with timely information, and it regularly features the "Free Radio Directory" compiled by John T. Arthur, which lists all known station addresses. [One can be found in this publication. It is updated by the author quarterly.] You can obtain more information about the A*C*E by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope to A*C*E, Post Office Box 245, Moorhead, MN 56560. If you enclose one dollar, you will receive a sample issue of the monthly bulletin. It is something the serious pirate DXer should not be without. You can also check communications magazines, as a last resort. Unfortunately, such magazines suffer from being out of date long before the issue even goes to print...often the information you will find is several months old. Things change fast in the world of pirate radio!

Okay, now you have the address. Now what?

In preparing a reception report, there are certain bits of information you must give about your reception. You have to prove that you heard the station. There are also certain items you can include in your report...things that might not be necessary to prove your reception, but that will increase the odds that the station will appreciate your letter, therefore increasing the chances that it will respond to it. And getting the station to respond is the whole point, isn't it! Here is a guide on what a report should contain:

Frequency of Reception: Give this as accurately as your receiver will permit. Also not if any drifting of the frequency was apparent.

Date of Reception: Give this in both your local time and in GMT if they are different. 10:00 p.m. EST on January 1st local time would equal 0300 the next day - January 2nd - in GMT terms.

Time of Reception: Again, give this in your local time, and in GMT. If you are not familiar with GMT (sometimes called "UTC"), you can sometimes get by with just giving your local time when reporting to pirates, but most shortwave hobbyists think in terms of GMT, and you should try to as well. A conversion chart can be found in most shortwave books intended for beginners in the hobby.

Program Details: This is where many reports fall short. A simple listing of "music, talk, music, ID, talk..." proves nothing. Be as specific as possible. List song titles, when known, or at least the type of music you heard, whether the singer was male or female, etc. When the announcer talks, mention what he said. You don't have to give a word by word transcription, but exact wording of ID announcements makes for excellent program detail. If a comedy routine was heard, don't just say "you played comedy," give the subject the routine was about, too. In short, be specific, but don't overdo it. Be precise and to the point. The details should cover at least 10 to 15 minutes of programming. If you only heard the last five minutes of a program, you can still try sending a report, but giving good details is even more important. Listing details for the entire program doesn't hurt any, and in fact may indicate to the station that its program kept your interest.

Reception Quality: Using the SINPO (or SINFO) code is okay, but you should still have a brief paragraph describing the reception. For example:

"Your signal was fairly strong, reading S7 on my meter, but suffered from slight interference from a utility station. Atmospheric noise was slight, and fading was moderate. Overall quality was fairly good. I'd rate your signal SINPO-34433."

Audio Quality: Another area which many reports neglect, but is of great interest to the station: How did the audio sound to you? If it was good, say so...if you thought it was outstanding, say so...if it was distorted, say so! Did it sound overmodulated? Undermodulated? Was it clean and crisp, or muffled and mushy? If it was less than par, be careful how you critique it. Be honest, but don't be blunt.

Receiver Information: Tell the station what you used to hear the signal. Don't forget to say what kind of antenna was used.

Postage: Most stations will announce what they require for return postage. The usual requirement is three first class stamps. A few stations only ask for a SASE. Follow the requirements announced when known, and when in doubt, enclose three first class stamps.

Extras: A little extra effort can go a long way toward getting that QSL. Most stations love to hear a cassette recording of their signal as heard far away. If you do send a cassette, be sure to throw in some extra stamps, since it costs extra to mail. Some stations might even return your tape to you, with a "studio quality" recording of some of their programs. A little personal information about yourself is usually of some interest, such as your age, occupation, how long you have listened to shortwave and pirates, how many other pirates you've logged, etc. Tell the station what you thought of its program. If you didn't exactly like it, give some suggestions as to what you would like to hear. Many other things can be done to make your report stand out...use your imagination!

Timeliness: The sooner your report is in the mail, the more interesting it will be to the station. A report that arrives a month after the transmission is not all that interesting, since the station has likely received several reports already...so it already knows how well its signal got out. In fact, some old reports may just be ignored by some stations. It is best to get the report in the mail within a couple of days after hearing the station. Many stations will verify older reports out of courtesy, but why take the chance? If you wait too long, you not only have to prove your reception, but you also must give enough detail to prove that you didn't take the details out of a club bulletin!

If you follow the guidelines above, your chances at receiving a QSL from any particular pirate station will be increased. It still won't guarantee a QSL will be forthcoming, but you will know you have given it your best shot. If a QSL has not arrived within a few months, and you know that the station sent QSLs to other listeners, you can try sending a follow-up report, which ideally should be a copy of the original report you sent, with a note attached explaining why you are sending another one. Or better yet, hear the station again and send a fresh report. Follow-up reports should also contain the postage the station asks for.

And there you have it! Happy QSLing!

Scott McClellan has been DXing the pirates for four years. Having logged 120 pirates (12 European) and verifying 55, he is one of the leading pirate DXers in the US. Scott has also operated a maildrop for the past four years as well as authoring a column in "The Shortwave Guide" pertaining to pirate radio.

THE DIRECTORY 5th Edition

by John T. Arthur

These are known mailing addresses of active and planned North American free radio stations, revised through December 20, 1984. MW and FM frequencies given, [*] = also on shortwave.

2226 S Gunderson, Berwyn, IL 60402
WCFR

2248 West 37th St, San Pedro, CA
90732
KDNF-1210

Box 144, Riverside, NJ 08075
KHO

Box 245, Moorhead, MN 56560
The Crystal Ship, Radio North Coast
International, WDX-1620, Zeppelin
Radio Worldwide

Box 393, East Moline, IL 61244
Radio Sound Wave

Box 542 Exeter, NH 03433
KPRC-1616//91.5*

Box 747, Paso Robles, CA 93446
Radio Los Angeles

Box 852, Anchorage, AK 99506
KST - Artic Radio

Box 1411, Calumet City, IL 60409
Voice of Redemption

Box 1945, Delray Beach, FL
WMTV

Box 982, Battle Creek, MI 49016
WIMP, KLS, KNBS, KQRP, KTGR,
KXRG-1615, Radio America, Radio
Clandestine, Radio Ganymede, Radio
Paradise International, Samurai Radio,
KRZY, Voice of Laryngitis, Voice of
Revolutionary Vinco

Box 5074, Hilo, HI 96720
WEAK, WKUE, WMAD, WROT, WYMN,
WQTU-1620, KEXJ-105.9*, KFRO,
KFAT-1560*, KQSB, KSOS-88.0,
KTEL, Radio Sine Wave, Radio USA,
Radio Woodland International, Rolling
Thunder Radio, Secret Mountain
Laboratory, Tangerine Radio,
Toynbee Radio, Union City Radio,
Voice of Bob, Voice of the Rainbow

Box 6024, Chicago, IL 60680
Radio Heartland

Box 20039, Ferndale, MI 48220
Voice of Tomorrow-1616*

Box 23792, Phoenix, AZ 85063
Fantasy Broadcast Station

Box 40554, Washington, D.C. 20016
WBST-666*, Radio Bag, Pirate Radio
New England-1616*

When contacting a free radio station:

If an address is announced, use it. If not, use the listed address. If all else fails, write to one of the main maildrops.

Do not expect a 'drop to pay for your QSL. Enclose adequate postage for forwarding and reply; three 22-cent stamps cover everything. Do not send a SASE unless requested by the station.

Do not blame the 'drop if you never hear from the station. Announcing a maildrop is no guarantee of response. We are not QSL Managers, we just handle mail. Operators should keep their promises.

Avoid asking about location. It is a dumb question; operators only answer to mislead the correspondent. Most answer non-sensitive questions about power and equipment, however, and appreciate technical observations, bandscans and cassette recordings. If you operate and desire audience contact, use a maildrop for security. The open 'drops are:

Box 982, Battle Creek, MI 49016

Box 5074, Hilo HI 96720

Box 245, Moorhead, MN 56560 has offered the service in the past. Write for details before using any address!!

Operators are requested to confirm activity and address information for periodic updates of The Directory; listener input is welcome. Write to: Box 5074, Hilo, HI 96720.

Thanks to Arthur G. Pym, Scott McClellan, Darren Leno and Kirk Baxter for assistance in compiling this list.

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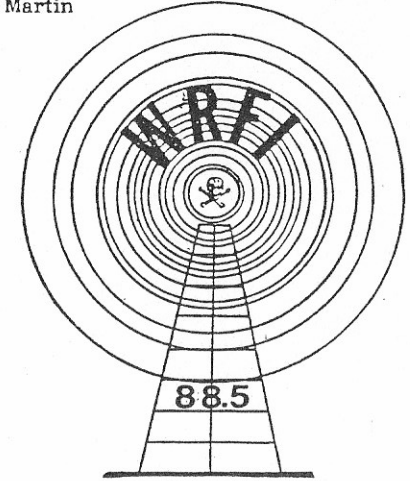
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RADIO FREE ITHACA--THE LIFE AND TIMES OF A COMMUNITY-SUPPORTED FM PIRATE STATION

by William J. Martin

Although the shortwave and medium wave pirate stations in North America typically receive all of the publicity and attention within the pirate listening sub-hobby, each night across the country numerous unlicensed broadcasters take to the air in the FM band. These stations usually operate on frequencies near the lower edge of the FM band, such as 88.5 MHz, to avoid interference from the more powerful commercial broadcasters and the aviation services above 108 MHz. Unlike their shortwave counterparts, the FM pirates typically are not interested in generating nationwide publicity or acclaim - they often exist to serve their local communities...acting as an alternative to the homogenized pap served up by large commercial interests.



RADIO FREE ITHACA

One such community oriented - and supported - pirate broadcaster operated from Ithaca, New York over a five (5) month period commencing in late 1979. That station, calling itself WRFI - Radio Free Ithaca - broadcast its unique mixture of music, comedy and public service programming to an estimated 500 to 1500 listeners each evening.

Until the station's bust by agents of the Federal Communications Commission on April 23, 1981, WRFI was undoubtedly one of the most successful and accepted local pirates in this country...yet little has been written of the station in the hobby press. This article will examine the history of WRFI, the Ithaca community's reaction to the station, and the ultimate steps taken by the Federal Communications Commission to shut the station down.

The Early Days

Ithaca is a relatively small community of some 30,000 people in central New York State. There are, however, a number of colleges and universities in the area. The students at these schools made up a potentially large audience in 1979 when WRFI was first envisioned by a 30 year old research assistant at the Cornell Particle Accelerator Laboratory. The researcher, an electrical engineer, reasoned that since the area's commercial and college stations had forsaken the "progressive" programming of the type made famous in the late 60s and early 70s, there was an unmet need in the community for diversity and innovative programming...particularly locally produced material.

The young engineer, who would later use the "one-the-air" identity of "The Night Doctor," purchased an unwanted, thirty year old REL-706 model FM transmitter from the Chief Engineer of an Ithaca-area college station in 1979,

assuring him that the transmitter was needed for "plasma experiments." With the Night Doctor's electronics background, it did not take him very long to fire up the vintage ten (10) watt transmitter for test broadcast purposes.

Radio Free Ithaca Takes Shape

After its early, crude test transmissions in November of 1979, Radio Free Ithaca became more than the isolated brainchild of an electrical wunderkind...it became a community project. During the next four to five months, over twenty people assisted the station and helped build a technical complex that would make many commercial broadcasters envious.

To boost the REL transmitter's feeble power, the station personnel erected a sixty (60) foot tower and mounted a vertically polarized Winegard model 6065 Yagi antenna (which offered 11.2 dB gain) at a height of approximately 35 feet. The Yagi antenna, together with modifications which were made to the transmitter's output section, enabled the station to be heard over 40 miles out from its main beam - a transmitting lobe that easily covered the area and schools surrounding Ithaca.

The Night Doctor didn't stop there, however. He and his assistants added an RCA Model BTS-1 stereo generator to the station, as well as sophisticated homebrew audio compression and limiting equipment.

Not all of the improvements were related to the transmitter...the station's studio was built up to include two (2) turntables, cassette and reel-to-reel tape recording decks, and a five-channel mixing board. WRFI then set to work to supplement its library of music and other types of programming...at one point accumulating over 800 albums and numerous listener-provided tape recordings.

Regular Programming Commences

By March of 1980, the technical and studio work had been completed and WRFI began regularly scheduled broadcasts in stereo every evening on 88.5 MHz. A number of persons volunteered their time as disc jockeys at the station, with the resultant programming being very hard to categorize...an evening's program might feature jazz, the blues, new wave, and Pink Floyd music.

A variety of disc jockeys served at the station, using names such as "Ozmo the Great," "Vermont," and "Cathy Deeley...Deelz at the Wheels."

Nevertheless, the station did develop one habitual characteristic...every evening at 10:00 p.m. it relayed the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) World Service News program, taking the feed off of a Panasonic RF-2800 shortwave receiver kept at the studio. Reportedly, the BBC new relay was an overwhelming favorite among listeners.

To publicize its operations, the station placed notices and advertisements in several of the local college newspapers, telling listeners to look for WRFI every night on its frequency of 88.5 MHz. Listeners were also encouraged to write to the station's postal address at "WRFI-FM, Community Access Radio, P.O. Box 894, Ithaca, New York" and to send in musical requests and tape recordings for rebroadcast.

One such advertisement was read by a free-lance journalist for the Ithaca Times newspaper, who contacted the station in early March to obtain further information for a feature story and to interview personnel. The free-lance

writer - who quite coincidentally also held an FCC broadcast engineer's licence - was permitted to visit the station and talked to several of the persons involved. His exclusive, entitled "Riding the Blimp, Riding the Waves" was published in the April 16, 1981 edition of the Ithaca Times. That article, although written in an affected style couched in terms of fantasy and ambiguity, was generally supportive of WRFI and its aim of providing Ithaca area listeners with alternative radio. At its best, the article let WRFI's operators do their own talking, as when it quoted one of the station's disc jockeys - "Dr. Whoopie" - as saying:

"Radio music is very strange...most stations play what the 'Hot 100' lists in magazines say is popular. Those lists, in turn, are based on record sales, and the records that sell are the ones people hear on the radio. It's all very circular. What really controls the whole market are the record company people...We [on the other hand] program whatever we feel like playing or whatever we have in our vast record collection...We want to play music that can't be played on other stations, to provide a community resource, to put on the air the music and tapes that people in the Ithaca area send to us, with a minimum of interference on our part."

Complaint Filed With FBI by Local Cable Company

Shortly after the favorable story was published in the Ithaca Times, the Chief Engineer of the Cerasche Cable Television Company - perhaps acting on his own behalf - complained about WRFI's unlicensed operations to an FBI agent assigned to the Ithaca area. The FBI relayed the complaint to the Federal Communications Commission's Field Operations Bureau (FOB) in Washington D.C.

The Washington FOB office responded by contacting the Engineer-in-Charge (EIC) of its Buffalo, New York, field office and requested that he investigate the complaint.

On April 22, 1981, FCC Technician James Taylor drove to the Ithaca area and there monitored an unlicensed broadcast station transmitting on 88.56 MHz. The station was indeed using the call "WRFI...Radio Free Ithaca." Taylor used the tape recording equipment in his vehicle to record over one hour of programming from 8:13 p.m. past 9:30 p.m. During this time, the FCC investigator noted that the station's programming consisted of music and public service messages, but did not include any commercial announcements.

The next evening, Taylor was joined by FCC Engineer Edward Kelly in the FCC MADF vehicle. The two engineers again drove to Ithaca and by 7:49 p.m. had monitored WRFI. Within a half hour, Kelly and Taylor had completed their close-in DF work...the station was traced to a house high on Snyder Hill Road in nearby Dryden, New York.

After taking RF measurements with the equipment in their vehicle, Kelly and Taylor approached the house, knocked, and requested entry to inspect the station. The disc jockey on duty at the time - Ozmo the Great - told the engineers to wait outside while he telephoned the Night Doctor to advise him of the bust and to ask what to do. Since the agents had no search warrant and WRFI was not a Commission licensee, the FCC's only hope of inspecting the station was that the operators would voluntarily "consent" to an inspection of the premises.

The Night Doctor advised Ozmo to keep the FCC engineers out of the house until he could get to the station.

Upon his arrival at the transmitter site, the Night Doctor did indeed consent to the inspection of the station. His recollections of that search...as recounted in a letter published in the August 1981 edition of "The Wavelength," the official journal of the now-defunct Free Radio Campaign U.S.A....were in stark contrast to the reports of the same search which were written by Kelly and Taylor.

In his letter to the "Wavelength" written shortly after the inspection but before any official FCC action, the Night Doctor described the FCC bust in the following terms:

"No hassle - open the door, take one look, and start laughing. [The FCC engineers] were, I almost hate to admit it, pretty cool, too, and dug the joke. They'd waited in the driveway for the album to end before bothering to knock, and let Ozmo do a decent sign-off complete with a call for me to haul ass up there...Well, anyway, they waited until I got there, we talked shop awhile...and they very nicely asked for a tour. After it was clear that they were on our side...assuring us that they didn't want to see anyone screwed...we opened some beers for ourselves and showed them our toys."

The Night Doctor's perceptions of that meeting differed markedly from the FCC's. In their report, Kelly and Taylor noted that they obtained the operators' consent to inspect the station and that an "announcement over the air that the station was being closed by the FCC" was made. This practice is consistent with the FCC's standard operating procedure...most likely spelled out in the Field Operations Bureau's Enforcement Manual...to obtain over-the-air corroboration that the inspected station was indeed engaged in unlicensed broadcasting. This type of evidence, together with other useful indicia such as the fact that a transmitter's tubes may be warm to the touch or its transmitting crystal or VFO may be marked "88.5 MHz," are entered in the FCC's internal records of the case to substantiate whatever administrative or criminal sanctions subsequently are taken against the operators.

Notice of Apparent Liability Issued

In a brief but to-the-point letter dated August 14, 1981, David A. Viglione - the Buffalo EIC - informed the Night Doctor:

"This is a Notice of Apparent Liability to Monetary Forfeiture. You appear to be in willful and repeated violation of Section 301 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, and the Commission's [administrative] rules...in that you operated a station which was not licensed for operation...You are therefore apparently liable under Section 504 (b) of the Act, which grants the Commission forfeiture authority, to a monetary forfeiture of \$750."

As in all cases in which the FCC issues a Notice of Apparent Liability, the FCC was required to offer the Night Doctor the opportunity to present a response and add to the record any information that might bear on the proposed fine. The Night Doctor replied on September 10, 1981, admitting the unlicensed operation of WRFI but justifying his actions on grounds that the Ithaca community needed the alternative provided by his station, as evidenced by the "positive and overwhelming" listener support received by WRFI.

The Night Doctor then offered an unusual and novel secondary justification for WRFI's broadcasts, stating that "WRFI-FM was also constructed as a technical testing ground for low power service...During transmissions, field tests were being conducted to determine true antenna array radiation characteristics, incremental polarization shifts over heavily wooded terrain (beyond the first Fresnel zone), multipath effects, and other measurements relating to received signal quality to transmission path effects when vertical polarization is employed."

After giving justification for the station's operations, the Night Doctor assured the FCC that he would cease all future unlicensed activity. He then asked the Commission to reconsider its imposition of the \$750 fine.

As a consequence of the appeal, the case file for WRFI was transferred to the Washington D.C. headquarters of the FCC's Field Operations Bureau. After reviewing the record, Richard M. Smith...the Chief of the FOB...wrote to the Night Doctor on November 17, 1981, to advise him that the \$750 forfeiture would not be reduced or cancelled. Smith's letter said, in part:

"On April 22 and 23, 1981, your radio station was observed in operation on the frequency of 88.56 MHz. The radio operation was determined not to be authorized by a station license, issued by this Commission, as Section 301 of the Act requires...Your response and background information about your station, while demonstrating your interest and concern for broadcasting, does not contain justification for reduction or cancellation of the monetary forfeiture...Payment is due within 30 days of the date you receive this letter."

Closed down and fined by the FCC, WRFI--Radio Free Ithaca became another station in a long list of pirates that have been built up out of nothing, flourished briefly, but eventually...perhaps inevitably...faded away.

Be assured, however, that as you read this article, someone - somewhere - is firing up an unlicensed transmitter and broadcasting the type of music and features that can't be heard from the commercial interests. Maybe you should check around 88.5 MHz late one evening; you may be pleasantly surprised.

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Bill Martin is thirty years old and has been DX'ing since 1968, when he heard his first pirate station. He has currently logged over 110 MW, SW and FM unlicensed broadcasters and has verified over 50 pirates. Bill is a member of ACE, NASWA, and the Longwave Club of America.

Bill lives in Wilmington, Delaware, where he works as a tax attorney. He has written a number of articles concerning the FCC and unlicensed broadcasters which have been published in The A*C*E and Monitoring Times magazine. He is currently researching and writing a book dealing with the history of pirate radio in North America.

RADIO FREE NASHVILLE - WRFN
The True Story - 1969

by Gripweed (with Sterling Seat
adding a little at the keys of the C-64)

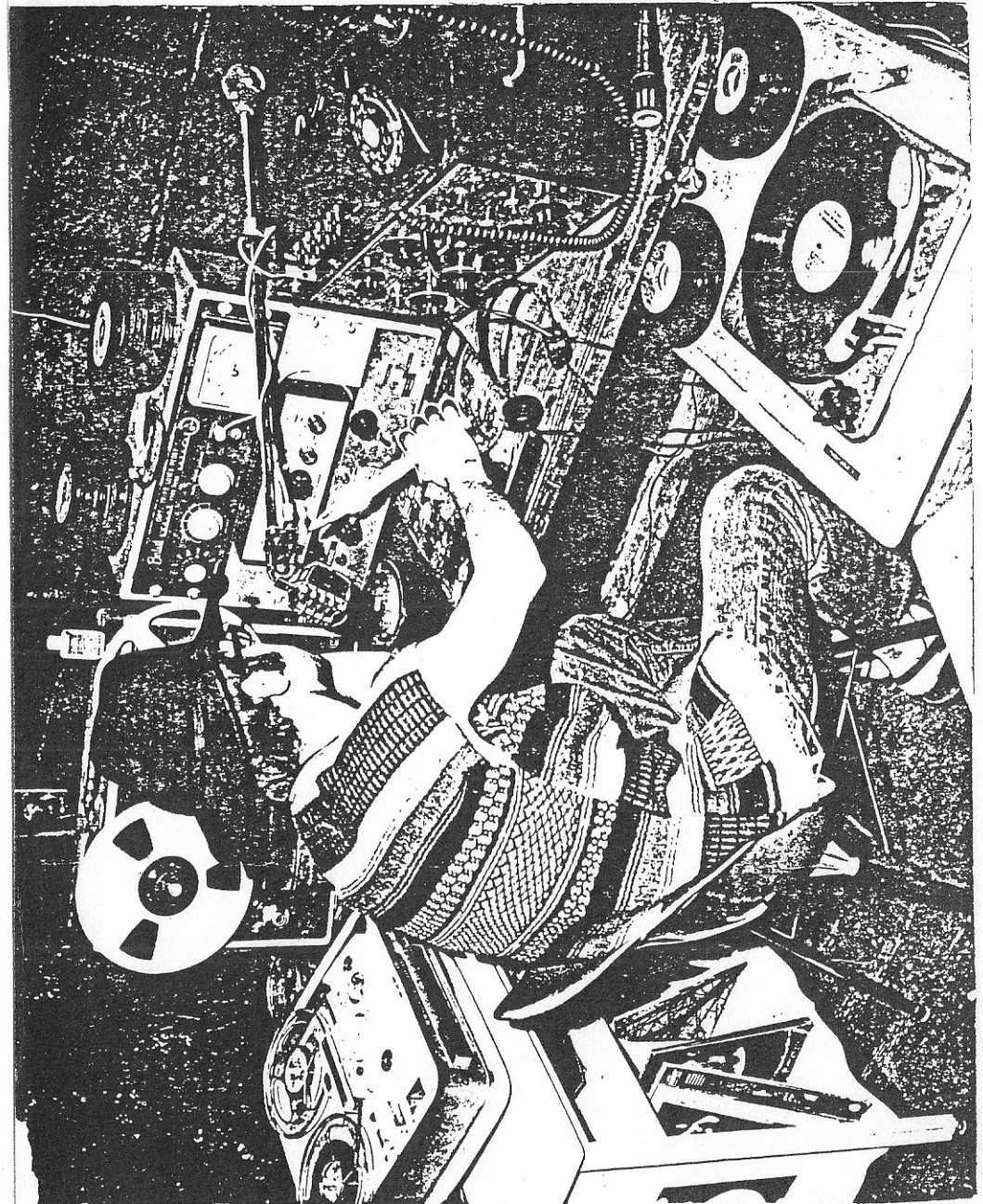
It was about this time of year in 1968 that the seed was planted. Gripweed had skipped school and sat in the drive-up of Burger King drinking bad coffee and studying for the FCC Third Class test he was to take later that morning in hopes of becoming a deejay somewhere. The radio blared the final Cook County vote tally as there proved to be 100,000 too few voters (cemetery absentees and otherwise) to keep Nixon out of the White House. Downhearted by the news, Gripweed called Sterling Seat at about 1:00 a.m. the next morning to commiserate. In a fit of revolutionary zeal and sleep deprivation, they formed FROG BROADCASTING, LTD. and decided to free the world through radio.

In our cohort group, there was JUDY, JUDY, JUDY, a seventeen-year-old part time deejay at a legit local Top 40 AM station; SGT. ZERO, the son of a Bible College teacher; CAPT. TRIPPS, a catatonic walking pharmacy with a basement suitable for a smallish broadcast studio; GRACIOUS BIRD, a brilliant ham radio freak turned assistant engineer at a major regional AM station; STERLING SEAT, whose air name seemed to have something to do with the silver commode seat hanging on the studio wall; and GRIPWEED, who had taken his name from the character played by John Lennon in the film "How I Won The War."

A little 100 milliwatt "Part 15" transmitter along with the preamp of an old RCA phonograph, a crystal mike, and a four-port Bogen Mixer became the first WRFN--Radio Free Nashville facility located in Gripweed's room at home. Located on the second floor of a highspot in the neighborhood, it covered about half a mile in all directions and was great fun until the preamp burned out. Sgt. Zero boasted an old Navy aircraft transmitter of World War II vintage from an army surplus store and when Sterling Seat found out it tuned through the medium wave broadcast band, he jumped on it. Capt Tripps entered the group at about that time; he had a likely host site for the endeavors. His parents hoped a little harmless (we lied to them) conspiracy would get Tripps unhooked from a pseudo-tragic love affair that kept him slopped out on downs in despair. They gave us the basement for the duration. That was about Thanksgiving of 1968.

A lot of spare change, scrounged parts, and hard work went into getting WRFN on the air during the next several months. The first test broadcasts were made in the spring of 1969; actual broadcasts began during the last week of school in 1969. The only "progressive" programming in Nashville at the time was the work of a renegade deejay named Johnny Walker (now top morning drive man in Baltimore, we think) for an hour every Sunday night about midnight on a Top 40 AM station. WRFN reached most of the western and southern suburbs of Nashville through the 35 watt army surplus transmitter and an end fed 100 foot long-wire antenna. Now Nashville had "progressive" radio.

Capt Tripps' parents never said a word when we dug up their yard to install over 500 feet of buried ground wire. Equipment modifications and adjustments were an almost nightly interruption of the broadcast schedule at first, but college and high school students in South and West Nashville would search at about 7:00 p.m. any given night to see if WRFN was on the air or not. The



original 1560 khz frequency was tuned with the internal VFO which drifted badly. Critical adjustments were made by "zero beating" the heterodyne using a distant receiver monitored by telephone. Eventually a custom made crystal controlled oscillator was constructed for the new 1580 khz frequency and transmitter alternations increased power to the 75-100 watt range. A real problem was the 600-800 cycle ac power requirement of the old GP-7 transmitter; the transformers would not take normal 60-cycle line current for long without overheating. The solution involved an old aircraft generator, belt driven by an electric motor, sitting outside the studio window. The constant 600-800 cycle whine must have been most irritating to the neighbors (it could be heard over any kind of receiver in the immediate area). By this time, WRFN was reaching some pretty far off locations and drawing the attention of legal broadcasters who began complaining to the FCC.

Several of us leafletted a free rock concert in Centennial Park at the beginning of summer, announcing the new underground station. We conspirators were a non-political lot at the time, but some "lefties" found out about us and made contact with donations and the offer to introduce us to dope smoking by mid-summer. The programs of each individual conspirator were unique to their own interests. Zero even wanted to do remotes of high school ball games, but that was nixed as being too dangerous. Almost nothing else was censored by the group. Zero contented himself with playing a lot of singles that never got on the local Top 40 stations (Sterling Seat often snuck the worst of the lot out of the studio). Gripweed and Sterling Seat began playing what would become the early 1970s FM rock album acts, adding Frank Zappa, Country Joe and the Fish, Apple Tree Theatre, Murray Roman's "Blind Man's Movie," an arcane concept album on the Chicago Democratic Convention of 1968 by one St. Steven, The Fuggs, The Velvet Underground, and others. We found a bag of large yellow and blue campaign buttons that said "SAL" on them. No one knew what it meant, but we gave out numbers of area phone booths and offered "Suck A Lizzard" buttons to anyone calling or writing, just to gauge how many people were listening. Sterling Seat even devised an extension telephone that connected to a pay phone terminal block and allowed answering the pay phone from the comfort of an automobile. A phone patch at the studio made it possible to air relayed calls.

Gracious Bird had a sarcastic fascination with religious programs and would do his best imitation of his favorite radio preacher saying things like, "This is Gracious Bird with the Weirder Word and I'm gonna lay it on ya children." Capt. Tripps (taking his name from Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead) often played morose classical music like Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D-Minor and addressed all his patter between cuts to his girlfriend who was to be found in the driveway with the car radio blaring, listening to him. Given the odd and irregular hours of broadcast, she might have comprised a large portion of our audience some nights.

Two radio buffs who had been trying to find our location all summer narrowed the area down enough to obtain the numbers for every phone booth in the vicinity. One phone booth call-in night, they followed Gripweed back to the station. It was raining and they crawled on their bellies over 100 yards through neighbors' lawns thinking we were so underground that we would have armed guards posted. They sure looked funny walking in the basement, covered with mud and finding many extra friends milling around in the party atmosphere that shows became by July.

The FCC came walking into the backyard one night in the form of an employee, on vacation, from the Atlanta FCC office. He wanted to warn us how easy we were to find if anybody really wanted us, which they would if we kept WRFN going much longer. We signed off early that night, first assuring Tripps' parents that it really meant nothing, they huddling scared to death in Tripps' attic bedroom while Tripps took his medicine in gargantuan doses and passed out. Judy and Zero quit the station after that episode, but the rest of us plowed on.

The parties in the control room got bigger and bigger, as fans and friends piled in to do guest slots and insult each other over the airwaves. WRFN was nothing if not a "people's station." With the advent of the crystal frequency control and the beefed-up transmitter, we were reaching virtually all of Nashville and could even be heard weakly in outlying towns like Franklin, Tennessee. We blazed the trail for WKDA-FM which went on the air legally a few months after we shut down and called themselves Radio Free Nashville for awhile with a similar free-form format (until they built up ratings and could sell advertising time).

One night in September, Gripweed was on the air doing his famous takeoff on Top 40 in which he brayed like a hyped deejay, "The Gripweed Power Hour, where every other song is the same song." A panicky phone call from Sterling Seat warned Gripweed to sign off and shut down. Sterling's father had been warned by a friend in the domestic spy agency even spookier than the FBI, the National Security Agency, that WRFN was about to be busted. The NSA and the FCC had known about us all summer and not cared because they assumed we would not last long and we were not political. We had unknowingly crossed that line when we began mentioning the names of local "radical agitators" on the air and thanking them for their contributions.

Gripweed stayed on for about thirty more minutes, announcing "the end" like a Conelrad Alert, thanking everyone and playing the last few "underground" hits our melodramatic teenaged hearts through would never be heard on nashville radio again. To his chagrin, WSM-TV newsmen called on the private studio phone wanting to know why the station was closing with no notice. They had been listening all summer and wanted to know if they could do anything to help us stay on the air, or come out that night to do a story on WRFN for the next day's news otherwise. Faced with the fear of going to jail for liberating the airwaves without a licence, we declined.

The station was dismantled and secreted all over town that very night. The crystal was destroyed.

Sterling Seat and, later, Gripweed would go on to work on "underground newspaper" until the decline of that media by the mid 70s. Judy, Judy, Judy became a TV news show producer, Sgt. Zero a footwashing Baptist preacher. Capt. Tripps married the girlfriend in the driveway and reduced his dosage significantly. The Gracious Bird is still brilliant and works in the broadcast industry somewhere.

The WRFN--RADIO FREE NASHVILLE logos arose again in an unrelated development in the mid 70s when the private black college, Fisk University, went on the air with a short range FM student station. WRFN later changed call letters to WFSK.

VIEWPOINT

from Radio Sound Wave

The idea to set up some kind of AR station had been going through my mind for about 1½ years. However, knowing that it could not be done alone and having a lack of local interested parties, the idea was put off. However, last spring, I was in Cincinnati for a conference and met a good friend who operates, or I should say, used to operate Radio Sine Wave. We met, exchanging ideas about station names, etc. My first idea for a name was "Radio Sine Wave" but since my friend liked the name, I was left to find something similar. I thought awhile about his suggestion, "How about Sound Wave?," agreed it was a good name and stuck with it. After leaving the Queen City, though, my interest waned.

I later began communicating with another friend (who now operates Radio Spectrum) through UBIX. We were able to exchange much information and again, my interest grew. Soon, finding suitable equipment was my major problem. I already had at my disposal a Shure mixer and microphone, left over from making demo tapes as a former radio news reader. I asked the master, Dr. Why?, what he felt would be a good transmitter to use. He gave me some suggestions; I went from there. However, an ad appeared in A*C*E about a radio I personally thought suitable - for \$15.00. I bought it and, after some minor modifications (it was originally designed for 2 MHz marine operation), I was able to send a carrier of 120 watts into the heavens.

A few weeks after, the first broadcast was made, lasting only fifteen minutes. Only one person reported hearing it (a little discouraging), but this was not enough to totally thwart my interest. RSW then went off the air, due to some transmitter problems, for about a month. We resumed, using a new transmitter, broadcasting in SSB, rather than AM, figuring our signal would get further. We knew we were sacrificing music audio quality, but reports to our station have indicated that, once tuned in properly, it sounds very good.

Ever since, Radio Sound Wave attempts to be on the air at least once a week and on holidays. We have not limited ourselves to our own programs. Rather, we carry the Verbal Assault network as well as offering members of the general listening audience an opportunity to produce their own eight-minute (maximum) programs for airing over RSW. We feel audience involvement in our programs is important, for without our audience, there would be no need for RSW.

The future looks very promising for RSW. We are currently building an FM transmitter to relay RSW programs of a community nature locally. There is also the possibility of relaying our programs via a European AR station, attracting an international flavor to our shows. Finally, it is hoped that we will attract advertisers to RSW. Those not afraid to be a part of the AR movement or who see AR as a viable, less expensive alternative for advertising to a specific listening audience are encouraged. Some British AR stations make the equivalent of \$2,000 per month in this manner. A venture such as this one is not only fun, but it can also be profitable. This would allow the station to obtain new equipment, etc. We at RSW see a new future for AR in the USA and are proud to be a part of it. Our listeners are welcome to contact us, expressing their feelings regarding our station. We are, after all, agents for them, not for ourselves.

THE STORY OF A*C*E

by Darren Leno

Pirate radio is a fascinating part of the radio listening hobby. Just as fascinating are the people who are associated with this victimless "crime." Perhaps, then, this is what has made A*C*E as fascinating as it is today. No longer is it just a club as it was when it first began in March, 1982. Thanks to the efforts of hundreds of people who have worked to build this organization, A*C*E has taken on a life of its own and has reserved for itself a reputable position within the radio listening hobby in a field where the word "reputable" was once seen only between quotes.

A*C*E began as an idea in the latter months of 1981. At that time, another organization known as the Free Radio Campaign - USA was in its decline. The FRC-USA had been founded in 1980, and had the support of 100 DXers when it folded. This organization's stand on pirate radio was firmly supportive, as indicated by constant editorials and comments by the club's outspoken president, Al Muick. Mr. Muick was the first person to organize both the pirates and the people who listened to them. His efforts, however valiant, were to prove ill-fated.

For a few months in 1981, while Al Muick was in Army bootcamp, I had the chance to publish the FRC-USA newsletter, The Wavelength. It was an exciting experience and put me in contact with many of the pirate operators I had been reading about and listening to. This experience laid the groundwork for A*C*E.

For reasons still unclear, after my work as FRC editor, I found myself outside the organization. Rather than pursue the matter further, I lost interest in the group I had been a part of since its conception.

The months passed, and I found myself in need of the pirate information I was now being deprived of. I called some of my friends who were still active in FRC-USA to see how things were, and to maybe get some listening tips.

One of the first people I called was FRC member Lani Pettit. She informed me that things were not so great with the FRC. The Wavelength was being published every two months, but often came out much later. Al Muick was now stationed in Germany and running the club from there, and there was a general feeling of discontent and frustration among club members and editors concerning the manner in which the show was being run.

My conversation with Lani started me thinking, and shortly afterward, I called Lani back with an idea for a club dedicated solely to clandestine broadcast stations. Since the FRC-USA gave minimal attention to clandestine broadcasters, it seemed to be an area that would not compete directly with the established club. Lani and I threw out some names on what we could call our new club, and the one that stood out was the Association of Clandestine Enthusiasts. We liked the initials, which obviously spell the word ACE. To make the name stand out a little more, asterisks were added between the letters, and A*C*E was born.

As the size of A*C*E increased, it became more difficult for one person to handle every detail of putting The A*C*E together. I decided to call Kirk Baxter and take him up on an offer he had made a couple of months earlier. "If you ever need any help, just ask," he had said. I admired the enthusiasm and vision he had for A*C*E, so when I went looking for help, I looked no

As president, publisher, founder, but always as a member of A*C*E, I am proud of what we have accomplished by working together. There is always room in A*C*E for one more person. We are an open membership club, and if you enjoy listening to pirates, clandestines, or spy-numbers stations, you will also enjoy being a part of A*C*E. Perhaps it is just the perspective I have acquired by being so close to the organization, but I truly believe A*C*E is among the most cooperative, visionary, friendly and fun radio clubs that exists on the international level. We are composed of people from every age group, both sexes, hundreds of occupations, and unique schools of thought. But despite our differences, we all come together each month through the pages of The A*C*E to talk about what we love - the challenge of finding the mysterious, and the thrill of being a part of it.

PO BOX 452, MOORHEAD, MN 56560 ** RBBS ON LINE 913/667-1288

ALTERNATIVE RADIO: EUROPE VS U.S.A.

by Mike Harris

There are some significant differences in the AR movements of Europe and the U.S.A. First, it should be noted that the SW medium has long been viewed in Europe as a means of broadcasting news and other programs to a specific country's audience. About 50% of both Eastern Europe and Western Europe have a radio capable of receiving DX signals - some as part of a regular AM/FM/VHF radio, etc. In the U.S.A., however, the situation is different. Just about the only people in the U.S.A. who have SW radios are those who are SW radio hobbyists. Also, there is a lack of interest in the U.S.A. to provide any commercial or public SW stations. This is evidenced by the fact that most American SW stations are not directed to American audiences. This is not the only problem facing the domestic AR movement in the U.S.A. however.

The other problem is the name given to most stations...PIRATE. Pirate, for me personally, conjures up a negative meaning (one out to take over, steal, etc.). For this reason, I prefer the term "Alternative Radio" (AR). It seems to tell the public that such a station is not taking anything from anyone else, just providing an alternative to what they might find elsewhere in the spectrum. The main difference between AR in Europe and the U.S.A. is the respective governments. In Europe, the media is "state controlled" - not so in the U.S.A. At least we are led to believe it's not.

In Europe, AR stations are able to attract huge audiences because they offer an alternative to what their governments want them to hear - and they have community support!! For example, in December of 1981, Radio Tour-Eiffel was opened in Paris, by the Mayor of Paris. The French Catholic Station, Radio Notre Dame, had the blessing of the Bishop of the Diocese. In Europe, there is a more sectarian influence on AR. There are Jewish, Arabic, student, African, Latin and many other types of stations. In America, the stations tend to be more music-oriented and generally carry no message, with some exceptions, of course.

In Europe, more of the stations tend to be unified. The operators know each other and exchange information, programs, etc. Here in America, there is a certain "air" or secrecy in the AR community. This author, for example, has known a prominent station DJ for some time now - over a year - only by his pseudo-name. In Britain, I know several station operators and have had dinner, tea, and live meetings with them. This is another problem with the United States operators: lack of intercommunications, evidenced by their occasional interference with each other. The comradeship is not there. Much of what the general public knows about AR in America is focused around the negative stations (i.e., Voice of Tomorrow). There is a need to help others realize (and a large organization would help on this issue) that only a very small percentage of AR stations are negative in nature.

It is possible that some people in America believe that listening to AR stations is illegal - it's not. There are laws not only protecting the freedom of speech in America, but also declaring the airwaves public property, in the public domain, etc.

Due to the large number of AR stations in Britain, they will be given the chance to become legal in a redistribution of radio frequencies due to be announced this year. The Home Office is expected to allocate part of the VHF band for the use of "community radio" stations, using low-powered transmitters and running principally on a volunteer basis, like many of the existing AR stations.

In conclusion, it seems that AR in Europe is much more advanced than alternative radio in the U.S.A. But what can be done? Organization is the key. This would promote more communication between operators and could help with another problem - public relations. It would help to quiet the public's ideas about "pirate" operators and show that there really is an "alternative." It is expected that two AR stations will take the lead in forming an organization, as suggested here, very soon. Hopefully, this organization will be given full support by the AR operators in America, while retaining a tight-knit group to preserve the integrity of its members. Finally, it is up to the public itself. Will it continue its non-support of AR in the U.S.A. or are AR operators be doomed to be the low class within the SWL community? Only time will tell.